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ABSTRACT

Ideas concerning the value of games and sports for school children changed gradually between 1780 and 1860. Although not always condemned by teachers, those activities were not considered part of school in the early period. Sports considered acceptable for nonschool hours were utilitarian activities such as hunting, fishing, field sports, boating, and swimming. After 1830, educators debated the merits of joining students in sports participation in order to provide moral guidance. Parents sent their children to private instructors in the community during nonschool hours in order to learn "refined" sports. By 1860 many sports were advocated as healthy, useful, and pleasurable physical activities for young boys. The need of physical activity for girls was also suggested, but sports for girls were not strongly advocated by educators of the day. Many academies provided playgrounds and facilities for students to use during recess. A few schools provided special instructors for certain "refined" sports, and in a few schools faculty participated with their students in these activities. Sport clubs were organized in order to compete against other teams, but generally these sport clubs remained under student control until after 1860. The resistance to sports participation by children had decreased by 1860, but it was not until after the Civil War that educators began advocating the inclusion of sports in supervised physical education classes in New England schools. (Author/JS)

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SPORTS AND GAMES IN NEW ENGLAND SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES 1780-1860

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Games and sports have been part of New England social culture from the time of the 17th century settlers. During the early colonial days settlers had little time for recreation but on feast days they participated in such merriment as field sports, wrestling, fishing, boating, and ball games. In spite of continuing opposition of New England Calvinists to "frivolous amusements" many games and sports gained an increasingly wider acceptance among New Englanders during the 18th century. Children played games during school recess and townspeople participated in sporting events on Training Day and festive occasions.

During the 19th century, immigrants brought their love of sports and recreation to the growing towns and cities, religious and moral leaders began advocating some utilitarian sports to keep people from sinful diversions, and educators and physicians became increasingly concerned about the debilitation and postural deviations of children. Each of these changes in New England society and thought helped pave the way for the acceptance of the need for physical exercise programs in schools and academies during the 19th century. Sports and games were one type of physical exercise program advocated and instituted in some schools during this period. Other types of programs included German gymnastics, military exercise, calisthenics, domestic economy, manual labor, and Dio Lewis school gymnastics.[1]

One of the earliest advocates of sports in New England schools was Samuel Moody, principal of Dummer Academy in Byfield, Massachusetts, 1763-1790. Moody believed that each boy should know how to swim because it was a healthful and relaxing activity and useful in saving lives, espe-

cially in New England where many young men became sailors. During school Moody would dismiss his students and order them to plunge into the nearby river whenever the tide was favorable. The students were separated into groups according to their swimming ability and the young novices were given swimming instruction.[2]

Other swimming advocates noted that it was one of the most important branches of physical education. They stressed that swimming was healthful, a means of preserving lives in boating accidents, pleasurable, easy to learn, and increased courage.[3] At both the New Haven Gymnasium and the New Haven Classical and Commercial School in Connecticut, boys were given swimming lessons three times a week in the Long Island Sound during summer terms.[4]

In 1794 Timothy Dwight, master of Greenfield Hill Academy in Connecticut, wrote that boys should be taught to "wrestle, leap, and run ... to seek, in acts like these, and find a nervous frame and vigorous mind." To encourage students to perform well in spelling, the winners of the Wednesday spelling bees were permitted a quarter hour more of play time than the losers.[6] Dwight believed that it was better for students to play games and sports during their free time than to "waste in gaming, drink, and strife health, honor, fame, and peace, and life."[7] In 1799 at Atkinson Academy in New Hampshire, John Adams Smith was charged nine pence for a ball. Most likely President John Adams' grandson was playing ball too close to the school and fined for his misbehavior. By 1801, a swing was put up in Parson Peabody's barn for the Atkinson students to

use during recess time.[8]

Sports suggested appropriate for recess and physical exercise periods during the early 1800's included running, fencing, hand-ball, football, shuttlecock, tennis, quoits, bowls, swimming, and tag games. At Round Hill, in addition to gymnastic and hiking activities, archery, tumbling, and running activities were included in the program.[9] At Moses Brown School in Providence, Rhode Island the students played battledore and jumped rope in 1819. This caused some head shaking among the sterner Friends at their Monthly Meeting. By 1835 the Moses Brown students were playing shinny and football. One boy kicked a football over the school house and when the feat was doubted a wittness proclaimed "Yes he did, I seed him, he keeked it clean over the peckits yender."[10] In 1833 Thacher Thayer gave boxing and fencing lessons in the evening to the boys at Hartford Grammer School to "expand the chest and impart grace of attitude and motion" in the boys.[11]

During the early 1800's the boys at Exeter Academy in New Hampshire played football in the fall and "rounders" in the spring and summer. School teams were divided according to the seating arrangement in the Latin room with those north of the main aisle against those sitting on the south side.[12] The boys at Hopkins Grammer School in New Haven, Connecticut played such games as one-old-cat, two-old-cat, marbles, and hide-and-seek during recess.[13] These games appear to have been popular among boys throughout New England. As at Hopkins, boys at most schools and academies had to organize their own games and sports without faculty supervision. Few instances have been found of faculty supervision or teaching sport activities before 1840.

The subject of athletic games in schools was discussed in 1831 at the American Institute of Instruction. At one meeting William Woodbridge asked "ought Athletic Games, combining exercise with amusement, to be united with Manual Labor in the education of youth, as a means of forming and invigorating the body?"[14] The question was debated with animation but no decisive conclusion was reached. Some educators were concerned about the usefulness of athletic games other than for healthful development.

Educators were advocating faculty supervision of sports during recess in order to control the sudents' behavior and to provide moral guidance. They noted that students acted more natural when playing games making it easier to mold their character.[15] The Connecticut Board of Commissioners of Common Schools suggested that teachers:

> keep a friendly eye on the efforts of the older to surpass one another in skill and agility, and perhaps gently assist the smaller boys in their less successful attempts to provide entertainment for themselves.[16]

Certainly one of the underlying influences for supervising games at recess was the need to protect school property. Rules aginst ball playing and rock throwing had not been effective thus some other method of controlling students and protecting school windows and passing townspeople had to be devised.

Frequently the question was not should sports be permitted during recess but rather should the school master join the students in sport activities. One teacher believed that through joining students in their sports he could provide a good example for them to follow. He wrote:

> By his example, by his looks, by his words, - by other means, ... may he mould their characters more truly, more thoroughly, more permanently, than ... by all other means put together.[17]

Some teachers feared that if they participated in the students' sports they would lose control of the students' behavior in the schoolroom. They suggested that student monitors be used instead to "take note of words and actions which they might deem incorrect," then report their observations to the teacher at the end of recess.[18] It appears that "tattle-tales" were already in vogue among school children. The concern of most educators was how to control students during recess rather than the need to teach sports as part of the physical education program.

Girls' participation in sport activities was also the subject of controversy during the first half of the 19th century. In 1801 the Salem Gazette reported that a woman had taught her class how to ice skate.[19] The uproar in Salem caused by this scandal led to an investigation into the virtue of the teacher. The teacher and class were finally vindicated when it was proven that the report was false.

Few sports and games were advocated as suitable for girls. Horseback riding was considered a necessary social accomplishment as well as a suitable physical activity. Women's magazines stressed proper riding attire and etiquette. They warned against the impropriety of riding at a gallop, and sitting astride the horse. The proper techniques of riding side saddle, maintaining correct posture, and cantering were described in detail.[20] Sarah Hale recommended swimming as a better physical activity than bathing in tepid water.[21] Battledore and badminton were two games recommended for girls "to promote Health, by means of gentle Ex-

ercise."[22] These two games in which a vellum ball or leather shuttlecock was hit back and forth across a net were considered games of accuracy and finesse rather that vigorous physical exertion. Though a variety of games and sports were played by girls, few were recommended as suitable physical education activities before 1860.

During the first quarter of the 19th century girls attending Miss Pierce's Litchfield Academy in Connecticut held bowling contests on warm days during their exercise periods before dinner.[23] In 1829 the girls at Greenfield High School for Young Ladies in Massachusetts played battledore and coronella. The school catalogue noted that the students were encouraged in pursuing their games "by the presence and frequent participation of the teachers."[24] At Hartford Female Seminary Catharine Beecher provided opportunities for students to join her in early morning horseback riding excursions.[25] Though calisthenics were advocated as suitable physical activities for girls throughout the second quarter of the 19th century it was not until the 1850's that New England's social climate relaxed sufficiently for educators to consider providing girls with opportunities to participate in vigourous sports and games.

After 1840 educators began to stress the values of sports participation in school programs. Henry Barnard recommended that children working in factories be provided exercise periods so that they could play games and sports of an innocent and rational nature for proper physical development, improved social relations, and to inspire cheerful thoughts.[26] William Alcott advocated inclusion of sports in school programs for their healthful and pleasurable aspects. Alcott recommended running, swimming,

wrestling, walking, skating, coasting, ball-playing, and games of physical enrichment as appropriate physical education activities.[27]

One of the most avid sports advocates during the 1850's was Thomas Higginson. His article "Saints and Their Bodies," published in 1858, is believed to have been one of the most effective American articles in support of sports in schools during the anti-bellum period.[28] Higginson believed good physical health was necessary for success in any endeavor. If America was to progress the physical degeneration among its citizens would have to be stopped. He wrote:

> Nervous energy is grand, and so is muscular power; combine the two, and you move the world.[29]

To develop muscular power Higginson suggested sport participation throughout the year, preferably outdoors. He believed that girls needed as much exercise as boys but in American society "morbid anatomy has long served as a type of feminine loveliness."[30] The thrust of Higginson's article was the healthfulness and enjoyment derived from participating in sports. He urged schools to include sports in their exercise programs so that vigorous healthy citizens would be developed who could aid the country progress toward its worthy goals.

After 1840 sports and games became increasingly popular in academies and some public schools. Hartford High School principal, Joshua Giddings, issued a proclamation declaring the week following April 26, 1848 as "a week of Public Rejoicing, Vacation, and Play" so that students could examine their ball clubs, fowling pieces and fishing tackle and "enjoy such sports as their fancy shall dictate."[31] Spring vacation! Fencing was often included in military academy programs along with military exercises

and gymnastics.

During the 1850's boating was taught at Middletown Institute and Preparatory School in Connecticut and Berkeley Institute in Newport Rhode Island.[32] It was so popular at Berkeley that the boys formed a Boat Club with its stated purpose being "full development of the physical powers and ... a means of relaxation and amusement."[33] Hopedale Juvenile and Collegiate Home School in Milford, Massachusetts included a charge for the use of recreational equipment in their tuition charges in 1855. These charges covered use of velocipedes, wagons, sleighs, bats, balls, hoops, grace hoops, pointer, battledores, and shuttlecocks.[34] In 1857 at the Family Classical School in Middletown, Connecticut Henry Colton taught boating, swimming, bowling and billiards to his students.[35] At Amherst Academy in Massachusetts, though the playground was too small for many ball games in 1857, the boys did play plug ball, tag, wrestled, long jumped, and in winter had snow ball fights along with gymnastic exercises.[36] In 1859 in addition to gardening, the boys at Practical Training School for Boys in Belmont, Massachusetts participated in bowling, and athletic exercises each after noon under the supervision of Mr. D. Mack.[37]

The Allen School in West Newton, Massachusetts provided facilities and equipment for bowling, football, baseball, boating, and swimming. Each afternoon was devoted to sports under the supervision of competent instructors.[38] Girls were given instrution in horseback riding and bowling at some girls seminaries including Mystic Hall, Abbot Academy, and Pittsfield Young Ladies Institute in Massachusetts, Glenwood Ladies Seminary in Vermont, and Hartford Female Seminary in Connecticut.[39] In the catalogues of these seminaries special teachers were listed as Horseback

Riding instructors along with the other faculty.

Students organized sport clubs in many schools during the 1850's. In 1853 nine boys from Phillips Academy challenged any eleven men to a game of "rounders." The challenge was accepted and the game was played on a field near the Academy. The Phillips' boys won: "the tally standing on the side of the nine, 50, on the side of the eleven, 17."[40] In 1856 the Phillips boys played an interclass football game for the possession of a trophy described as "a wooden horn decorated lavishly with paint." The senior boys won the game and the prized trophy.[41]

In 1857 the boys at St. Pauls School in Concord, Massachusetts began boating races, then two years later organized two cricket clubs.[42] Worcester Massachusetts High School students formed a baseball club in 1859, then in October challenged the Eaglets, a Worcester town team, to a game of 50 tallies. The game began at 2 o'clock with first one team then the other ahead by a few tallies, until after 6 o'clock when the game was adjourned because of darkness. The Worcester High School team was declared the winner because it was ahead 48 to 42.[43] An interesting side note is that when the club was first organized, girls were included as team members, but by October, girls were designated as score keepers and cheerleaders.

Though sport participation was student orgainized and controlled in most academies during the 1850's, sports were considered an integral part of the educational program at the Gunnery in Washington, Connecticut. Frederick Gunn, founder and master, considered manhood, character, and physique as the central objects of education for perfecting noble gentle-

men.[44] To prepare young boys to achieve these objectives he established the Gunnery as a day school in 1837. His unusual teaching methods and abolitionist ideas caused many Washington citizens to mistrust him and he was forced to close his school. In 1847 under more favorable conditions the school was reopened as a boarding school for boys ages eight to fifteen. Gunn, while at Yale had developed athletic skills and a zest for many sports that he maintained as master at the Gunnery. He encouraged his students to attempt almost any kind of athletic exercise because he believed that the experience learned through sports helped build manly Christian character as well as healthy bodies.[45]

The Gunnery boys, plus Gunn, played baseball, football, and roly-boly, and went sledding, skating, hunting, and fishing whenever possible. Roly-boly was a game combining bowling and throwing skills and was played usually during class recess. Baseball was the favorite sport at the Gunnery, possibly because it was Gunn's favorite activity. Each evening during the summer days Gunn and his boys practiced until dark. During the 1850's the boys played baseball against their classmates but in 1859 they played two games against a Litchfield men's team. Gunn helped his young boys by playing first base and hitting as many home runs as possible during their games. He believed that his young students developed manly character by competing against men much older than themselves.[46]

Gunn did not neglect academic subjects at his school but scholastic achievements were considered secondary to self-reliance, pure morals, manhood, and character.[47] Through sports Gunn hoped that his students could develop these traits.

During the 1850's sport clubs in schools were primarily formed to compete against other teams. Only at the Gunnery was the faculty involved in the conduct of student teams and sport clubs prior to 1860. At most other schools and academies sports and games were considered healthful recreational activities but not part of the educational program.

Ideas concerning the value of games and sports for school children changed gradually between 1780 and 1860. Early in the period these activities, though not always condemned by teachers, were not considered as part of school time activities. Sports considered acceptable for non-school hours were those of a utilitarian nature such as hunting, fishing, field sports, boating and swimming. Few educators stressed the enjoyment aspect of sports.

After 1830 educators debated the merits of participating themselves in sports with students to provide moral guidance. Few references indicated that teachers thought about providing instruction in sports. Parents that wanted their children to learn certain "refined" sports sent them to private instructors in the community during non-school hours. By 1860 many sports were advocated as healthful, useful, and pleasurable physical activities for young boys. Higginson stressed the need of physical activity for girls but for the most part sports for girls were not proposed by educators of the day. The battle for social acceptance of girls participating in vigorous sports was one that had to be fought at a much later date.

Many academies provided playgrounds and facilities for students to

use during recess time. A few schools provided special instructors for certain "refined" sports, and in a fewer schools faculty participated with their students in these activities. Sport clubs were organized in order to compete against other teams but for the most part these sport clubs remained under student control until after 1860. The resistance to sports participation by children had decreased by 1860 but it was not until after the Civil War that educators began advocating the inclusion of sports in supervised physical education classes in New England schools.

FOOTNOTES

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